

Message Text

SECRET POSS DUPE

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12-S

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 /028 W

----- 117008

P R 300540Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4844

COMUSMACTHAI

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 9857

KUALA LUMPUR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR
WHITEHOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, OVIP (HABIB, PHILIP C.)

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT TO BANGKOK: BACK-
GROUND PAPER

1. THIS PAPER REVIEWS FOR YOU SOME OF THE MANY ISSUES
CURRENTLY AT PLAY IN U.S./THAI RELATIONS, AND TOUCHES ON SOME
OF THE MAIN POINTS WE EXPECT TO SURFACE IN YOUR MEETINGS HERE.

THE TIMING OF YOUR VISIT

2. THE TIMING OF YOUR VISIT SO SOON AFTER THE DEMISE OF
PHNOM PENH AND SAIGON, AND JUST AS COALITION GOVERNMENT IN
LAOS IS PLAYING OUT ITS DEATH SCENE, MAY LIMIT YOUR CON-
VERSATIONS HERE TO AN EXCHANGE OF UNFIXED VIEWS AS TO WHERE
BOTH SIDES THINK WE WOULD LIKE TO GO AS WE JOINTLY ENTER THE
POST-VIETNAM WAR ERA. MOREOVER, THE THAI ARE JUST BEGINNING
A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF U.S./THAI RELATIONS
AND WILL WANT TO AVOID EMBARKING ON ANY BRAVE NEW COURSE
UNTIL THEY HAVE COMPLETED THEIR HOMEWORK.

3. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT YOUR VISIT CAN HAVE CONSIDER-
ABLE VALUE IN TERMS OF REITERATING THE COMMUNALITY OF
INTERESTS WE SHARE. THE LARGE NUMBER OF IRRITANTS IN OUR
BILATERAL DEALINGS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAS TENDED

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TO OBSCURE THE BASIC VALUE TO BOTH THAILAND AND THE U.S.
OF OUR BROAD RANGE OF CLOSE RELATIONS, INCLUDING MUTUAL

SECURITY ACTIVITIES. WE HOPE THAT YOUR VISIT CAN HELP REESTABLISH A SENSE OF THE FOREST, RATHER THAN BE A DREARY ENUMERATION OF THE THORNIER FLORA THEREWITHIN. DESPITE THE STILL MURKY SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE THAI WILL PROBABLY BE LOOKING FOR REASSURANCES OF WASHINGTON'S STEADFASTNESS OF PURPOSE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME RESERVING JUDGMENT ON ANYTHING YOU SAY UNTIL U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTIONS LEND SUBSTANCE TO YOUR WORDS.

4. THE AFTERTASTE OF THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR CONTINUES TO BE LARGELY BITTER, ALTHOUGH THAI MILITARY LEADERS HAVE PRIVATELY APPLAUDED OUR USE OF FORCE. YOUR VISIT CAN BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN DEMONSTRATING THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE VALUE THAILAND AS AN OLD AND CLOSE ALLY, AND OUR INTEREST IN RESTRUCTURING THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO RETAIN AND INCREASE THE VALUE THAT BOTH SIDES PLACE ON THIS ASSOCIATION. IN PARTICULAR, ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO DECREASE THAILAND'S FEELING OF IMPOTENT INEQUALITY IN THE CONDUCT OF THE HARD ISSUES OF OUR RELATIONS WILL BE AN ENORMOUS ASSIST.

WHAT THE THAI WILL PROBABLY HIT YOU ON

5. BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT ESPECIALLY THE LATTER, ARE LIKELY TO VENT THEIR RESENTMENT AGAINST OUR REAL AND IMAGINED INFRINGEMENTS OF THAI SOVEREIGNTY. THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR WILL LEAD THE PARADE, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY THE DIFFICULTIES OUR EVACUATION FROM THAILAND OF INDOCHINA MAP/MASF AIRCRAFT HAS CAUSED THE RTG IN ITS INCIPIENT RELATIONS WITH SAIGON AND HANOI. BOTH KHUKRIT AND CHATCHAI WILL GLOSS OVER THE FACT THAT WE REMOVED THESE PLANES WITH SUPREME COMMAND PERMISSION AND THAT THEY, IN FACT, CREATED THE PROBLEM BY SAYING PUBLICLY AT THE VERY OUTSET THAT THEY WOULD RETURN THESE ITEMS IF ASKED. NATURALLY, HANOI AND THE PRG DID ASK. BEYOND THIS THEY WILL NO DOUBT COMPLAIN ABOUT THE LARGE NUMBER OF KHMER AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND IMPLORE THAT WE ASSUME THIS BURDEN, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE RTG LEADERS WILL MAKE THESE POINTS WITH AN EYE TO DIVULGING WHAT THEY TOLD YOU IN THE IMPROMPTU PRESS CONFERENCES THEY WILL GIVE OUTSIDE THEIR

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OFFICE DOORS BEFORE YOU ARE EVEN OUT OF THE BUILDING. DEPENDING ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION IN LAOS WHILE YOU ARE HERE, YOU CAN EXPECT THE THAI TO CAUTION YOU AGAINST OUR STAGING U.S. MARINES OR FIGHTER AIRCRAFT OUT OF THAILAND FOR ANY EVACUATION OF EMBASSY VIENTIANE.

6. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI, ARE LIKELY TO QUESTION YOU ON THE PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

U.S. FORCE REDUCTIONS

7. YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS IN BROAD TERMS THE CONTINUATION (DOWN TO ZERO) OF THE PRESENT REDUCTIONS IN OUR MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE YOU REVIEW OUR REASONS FOR POSSIBLY WANTING, AND OUR EXPECTED USES OF A SMALL RESIDUAL NON-COMBAT BASE HERE--AND OUR INTERESTS IN A LONG TERM INTELLIGENCE PRESENCE. THE PURPOSE OF SUCH A DISCUSSION WOULD NOT BE TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE NEXT TRANCHE OF OUR REDUCTIONS, OR TO KNOCK HEADS WITH THE STATED RTG POLICY OF OUR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, BUT RATHER TO SOW THE SEEDS OF A THAI RETHINKING AS TO WHETHER OUR COMPLETE AND ULTIMATE WITHDRAWAL WOULD NARROW OR WIDEN THEIR FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS.

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8. IN PARTICULAR, IT WOULD BE WELL TO REITERATE WHAT I ASSUME CONTINUES TO BE U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY THAT WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN RETAINING A MILITARY OR ANY KIND OF PRESENCE IN THAILAND AGAINST RTG WISHES. IN THIS REGARD IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PROD THE RTG LEADERSHIP TOWARDS REACHING A POINT IN OUR RELATONS AT WHICH THE THAI GOVERNMENT WOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE IN DEFENDING THE AGREED EXTENT AND NATURE OF OUR RELATIONS AGAINST STUDENTS AND OTHER DOMESTIC CRITICS. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PREVENT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS MOMENTUM AGAINST CLOSE ASSOCIATION OF ANY SORT WITH THE U.S. FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND IF THE RTG DOES NOT ADDRESS THIS PROBELM IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

9. IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR YOU TO REVIEW WITH THE THAI THE ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP A HEALTHY INVESTMENT CLIMATE AND TO UNDERScore FOR THEM THAT IT IS THEIR DOMESTIC HANDLING OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT, EVERY BIT AS MUCH AS, IF NOT MORE THAN, THE CHANGES IN THEIR FOREIGN RELATIONS WITH ASIAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, THAT WILL DETERMINE THE LONG TERM INTEREST OF AMERICAN INVESTORS. THE TEMCO CASE, LABOR PROBLEMS, STUDENT AGITATIONS, THE RECENT TERRORIZING OF AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN'S FAMILY, AND THE DIFFICULTIES INVESTORS FACE IN GETTING A UNIFORM LEVEL OF COOPERATION FROM ALL RELEVANT RTG BUREAUCRACIES ARE THE KEY FACTORS THAT HAVE SOURED AMERICAN INVESTORS' INTEREST IN THAILAND IN RECENT MONTHS.

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THE SHAKINESS OF THE COALITION

10. NO MIRACLES HAVE OCCURRED SINCE YOU LEFT WASHINGTON THAT HAVE MATERIALLY STRENGTHENED THE KHUKRIT COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH DEPENDS ON THE SUPPORT OF 16 FICKLE POLITICAL PARTIES. STILL, KHUKRIT'S WEAKNESS REMAINS HIS STRENGTH IN THE ABSENCE OF A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE, AND IN VIEW OF THE COMMON DESIRE OF ALL POLITICIANS TO PAY OFF THEIR DEBTS FROM THE LAST ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEFORE EMBARKING ON A NEW ONE.

11. WE SHOULD DEAL WITH THIS GOVERNMENT AS THOUGH IT WERE GOING TO BE IN POWER FOR A YEAR OR MORE, AND NOT TRY TO HEDGE OUR BETS BY COZYING WITH THE THAI MILITARY. NOTHING COULD BE LESS IN OUR INTERESTS THAN TO ENCOURAGE THE THAI MILITARY, EVEN BY INDIRECTION, TO THINK THAT WE WOULD PREFER TO SEE THEM BACK IN POWER. SHOULD THEY LAUNCH A COUP, A CURRENTLY UNLIKELY BUT CONCEIVABLE POSSIBILITY, WE WOULD RECEIVE THE LION'S SHARE OF THE BLAME FOR HAVING PERPETRATED IT. IN ADDITION, BOTH WE AND A MILITARY RTG WOULD REAP THE UNDYING ENMITY OF THE LIBERAL ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS, WITH SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE URBAN ENCADREMENT OF THE STILL RURAL COMMUNIST INSURGENCY.

12. WE WILL BRIEF YOU MORE FULLY ON THESE MATTERS AS WELL AS THE SUBJECTS YOU ASKED ABOUT IN CINCPAC 192047Z MAY 75 DURING YOUR STAY.
WHITEHOUSE

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